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SUBJECT 1. Alleged Rocket Experiments in the Kara Kum Desert
2. Miscellaneous Military Activities

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Rocket Experiments

1. Experimental laboratories for the development of "secret weapons" were set up at Serny Zavod (approx. 40°N, 59°E) and Yerbent (39°20'N, 58°26'E), situated north of Ashkhabad in the Tashansk area of the Turkmen SSR.
2. Experiments in the launching of flying bombs and rockets were carried out in connection with these laboratories in the Kara Kum desert, some 80 kms northwest of Serny Zavod, from special airfields at Shor Tepe and Shor Cheshme near Ashkhabad. Three four-engined aircraft are reported to have been used at this stage at Shor Cheshme; later they were flown to Serny Zavod, where they remained. The rockets used in the experiments were transported from the Urals area via Kzyl Orda, and thence by rail through Tashkent.

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3. [redacted] in these experiments in the Kara Kum desert, some 600 persons working on rockets were seriously burned. They were flown to Ashkhabad, and thence were sent to Samarkand by aircraft and hospital train.* The burns were caused by a type of incendiary rocket, the effects of whose flame extended over a radius of 1 to 3 kms from the place of the explosion.

Miscellaneous Military Activities

4. Large-scale aircraft maneuvers were to take place between 7 and 15 April 1949 in the southern USSR, in conjunction with similar exercises in Europe. Hydroplanes and other aircraft were to practice laying ocean mines in the Caspian Sea.
5. Bases for torpedo aircraft were reported in February 1949 to be situated in the neighborhood of Armavir, Krasnodar, and Kutaisi in the Caucasus. At Kutaisi there is also a special group of military radio stations.

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6. In February 1949, at the order of local military districts commanders in Lithuania, some 2,400 tractors were collected from machinery depots in 927 kolkhozy and 104 sovkhhozy and taken over for army use.
7. In November and December 1948, approximately 36,000 reservists and conscripts from Lithuania were transferred to the districts of Penza and Saratov.

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Comment: This report may stem from the evacuation of victims of the Ashkhabad earthquake in October 1948, which gave birth to all sorts of rumors about atomic bomb tests, explosions, and the like. It is improbable that casualties of any kind would have been flown to Ashkhabad at that time, even in transit.

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